



BMW 5-Series

A Little effort, a lot of pleasure

Car review | It hardly seems worth testing the BMW 5-Series yet again. Its recent facelift is no more than extremely subtle modifications to the front and the rear lights. However, much deeper down the 5-series has undergone some really large improvements. The car is now even smarter and more progressive. Autozine felt this was reason enough to take this BMW 5-Series out for a run; these small modifications proved a lot of pleasure.

The external differences between the old and new 5-Series can be defined in a couple of words. There are some subtle modifications to the front making the car appear broader. The use of more elegant materials gives the interior a higher quality appearance. However, this is no reason as of yet to make a dash for your local BMW-dealer.

Safety

For those who might be interested in safety are rightly justified to drop by their local BMW dealership. For those of you who are not sitting on tender hooks for the latest in safety applications can jump straight to “The Real News” section. The modernized 5-Series is equipped with a number of new functions, which until now have solely been reserved to the absolute top segment.



The first of these is the Night Vision system which displays pictures from a thermal imaging camera on the central screen which is located on the dashboard. A short nocturnal test identifies that this system is best utilized as an interior mirror: the driver can keep his eyes on the road, but an occasional glance of the screen gives a more comprehensive view of the

driver's surroundings. Night Vision helps to identify those dark details which the naked eye might miss.

Also very handy at night are the adaptive forward lighting and the specially angled lights. Just as the car enters a curve, a beam of light is momentarily directed onto the edge of the road.



Another camera keeps an eye on the lines on the road surface. When the driver crosses over the lineation without using their indicators, a slight tremor is felt in the steering wheel. It's just as if those white lines on the tarmac are in fact thick grooves. It does remain solely a warning; BMW hasn't gone as far as Lexus where the car effectively makes a directional correction. These night driving aids are useful, but the question does remain whom this lane departure warning camera is for. If you can't stay in your lane, wouldn't it be better to stay out of your car?

Apart from the new safety facilities, the 5-Series offer extremely sophisticated technology in the field of luxury and leisure. Head-up display, iPod connection, electrically adjustable seats (both in length and breadth) are all available in the 5-Series. iDrive combines navigation, communication, audio and climate control in one system that is controlled with one dial. It's still the best on the market. With this new option list, there is not much difference in the way of kit between the 5-Series and its big brother the 7-Series.



The real news

Not only have the electronics been refined, but also the mechanics. That's where the real news is. At BMW, driving pleasure is central and the new 5-Series now offers a lot more. The unique combination is of course that the environment is being protected simultaneously. The underlying principle is as simple as it is effective: when all this equipment is not being used, it's shut off. The equipment that is being used must work as efficiently as possible.



Components which are generally mechanical, such as the hydraulic pump, power steering and so on are all now electrical. Consequently, it is easier to switch them on when they are really needed which in turn saves energy.

Any energy which is still required, comes from a specially developed battery. Under normal circumstances, a dynamo fills the battery to two-thirds of its capacity, whereupon the dynamo stops with loading, again to conserve energy. The dynamo is operated by the engine which requires fuel.

When the driver brakes or rolls forward, any expended energy which is usually dissipated, is now converted into electricity to be stored in the battery. The remaining third of the battery is filled with this “free” energy. All the parts which were previously mechanical and are now electrical, obtain their energy from this battery. And thus BMW's extremely efficient circle is completed.

Lightweight

The engine is a lean burn, which essentially means that the combustion is better controlled. This in turn means that the engine deals with the fuel more efficiently. All the internal parts have minimum friction, which again conserves more energy. Finally the whole engine block is lighter, thus there is less dispersal of weight.

Economization on the car's weight is the final secret of the 5-Series, but this is the most important. The

5-Series is certainly not small, but the car feels neither large nor heavy. The steering is nicely weighted allowing this comfortable touring car to communicate easily with the driver. With rear-wheel drive, this BMW can drive with all the precision and the pleasure of a sports car if so required.



A lightweight car can be brought to standstill quite easily and that is why the braking power is so enormous here. The braking power is perfect to apply gently and even from high speeds it is possible to stop the 5-Series within millimetres of the desired spot. Again the 5-Series feels less massive than it actually is.

The test car was equipped with the new 3-litre 6-cylinder petrol engine. Already at low rpms, this is a very strong engine. As soon as the needle moves towards 6,000 rpm on the rev counter, the full 272 hp lets loose. The light weight ensures that the engine then has an massive amount of power. The BMW 530i is then quite simply a seriously fast car.

Conclusion

Congratulations to BMW! As with all clever inventions, anyone could have thought of them retrospectively. However BMW has delivered a new 5-Series that is lighter than ever, with phenomenal driving characteristics.

At the same time, the engines are more efficient than ever, which means that the car is even faster. Any of the moving parts which are not required at any given moment are turned off making the 5-Series more economical than ever. It all took a little effort, but certainly the test drive in this modernized 5-Series was a lot of pleasure! ■



Specifications

BMW 5-Series 530i M Sport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	484 x 185 x 147 cm
Wheelbase	289 cm
Kerb weight	1.615 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	2.000 kg
Fuel capacity	70 l
Luggage space	520 l
Tyre size	225/50R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	2996 cc
Cylinders / valves	6/4
Max power	272 PS @ 6700 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 2750 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	6.5 secs
Top speed	250 km/h
Average mileage	7.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	10.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.6 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	178 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 37,415
Price base model	Â£ 27,000